

CLAIMS

1. A process for producing a set expanded foodstuff, comprising the steps of passing a soft expanded foodstuff composition at a first temperature and a first pressure into a setting region at a second temperature, said second temperature being lower than said first temperature, and cooling and setting said soft expanded foodstuff composition in the setting region at a second pressure which is lower than said first pressure.
2. A process for producing a set expanded foodstuff, comprising the steps of passing a soft foodstuff composition which may be in at least a partially expanded condition and which contains a vaporisable expanding agent, at a first temperature and a first pressure into a setting region at a second temperature, said second temperature being lower than said first temperature; and cooling and setting said soft foodstuff composition in the setting region at a second pressure which is lower than said first pressure so as to expand or further expand the foodstuff composition by evaporation of the vaporisable expanding agent.
3. A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein said vaporisable expanding agent is selected from supercritical carbon dioxide or nitrogen, or water.
4. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the first temperature is in the range of 70 to 150°C.

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5. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the first pressure is substantially atmospheric pressure.
6. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the second temperature is in the range of 10 to 50 °C.
7. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the second pressure is in the range of 2×10^4 to 7×10^4 Pa.
8. A process as claimed in claim 7, wherein the second pressure is in the range of 3.3×10^4 to 5×10^4 Pa.
9. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the setting region is substantially maintained at the second temperature and the second pressure.
10. A process as claimed in claim 9, wherein the setting region is provided with an inlet and an outlet, and is arranged such that the soft foodstuff composition enters the setting region via the inlet, and set expanded foodstuff emerges from the outlet.
11. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the foodstuff composition is carried through the setting region by a belt conveyor.
12. A process as claimed in claim 11, wherein the residence time of the foodstuff composition in the setting region is controlled by adjusting the speed of the conveyor.

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13. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein a chemical expanding agent is included as an ingredient of the composition.

14. A process as claimed in claim 1 or any one of claims 3 to 13 when appended to claim 1, wherein a gaseous or vapourisable expanding agent is incorporated into the composition.

15. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein expansion is at least partially effected by application of heat and/or by reduction of pressure.

16. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the foodstuff composition is a confectionery composition.

17. A process as claimed in claim 16, wherein the confectionery composition contains one or more ingredients selected from cocoa solids, sugar, other carbohydrate, malted milk, malt extract, skim milk powder, whole milk powder, maltodextrin, vegetable oil or fat, starch, binding agents such as gluten, casein, pectin, gum and gelatin, flavouring agents and colouring agents.

18. A process as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the foodstuff composition is subjected to a forming procedure, in which the foodstuff composition is formed into pieces of a desired shape.

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19. A process as claimed as in claim 18, wherein said forming procedure involves deposition of the foodstuff composition into moulds prior to expansion.

20. A process as claimed in claim 18, wherein the forming procedure is effected on the expanded but soft foodstuff composition.

21. A process as claimed in claim 1 or any one of claims 3 to 20 when appended to claim 1, wherein the soft expanded foodstuff composition is formed by extrusion.

22. A process as claimed in claim 21, wherein the extruded soft expanded foodstuff composition is cut into pieces and is formed into balls by tumbling, during which procedure the expanded foodstuff composition is heated to the first temperature prior to being passed into the setting region.

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